



Nathan Deal
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**DECAL's National Background Check Bill Clears House Committees,
Heads to House Floor on Monday**

HB 350 would require national fingerprint-based background checks for all employees of Georgia's 6,000 child care facilities protecting the health and safety of Georgia's youngest learners

ATLANTA, Ga., (March 1, 2013) – A bill requiring all employees of Georgia's 6,000 child care facilities to undergo national fingerprint-based background checks unanimously passed a House committee on Wednesday and is now scheduled to be on the House floor Monday. HB 350 is sponsored by State Representative Alan Peake (R-Macon) and backed by Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.

"This is a critical measure to increase child safety in Georgia," said Rep. Peake, the bill's sponsor. "It is now important that we clear the full House, the next step in achieving final passage."

"Child safety is a top priority of our agency. This bill is vitally important to Georgia's youngest learners," said Ray Higgins, DECAL's Deputy Commissioner for Finance and Administration. "We thank Representative Peake for his sponsorship and appreciate the time and attention of the House Judiciary Non-Civil and Rules Committees in examining the bill."

HB 350 would require all employees in a child care program to have satisfactory national background checks based on fingerprints, not just a name search of Georgia records. By requiring only a state background check on employees, today it is possible for people with criminal backgrounds in other states to be cleared to work in Georgia child care programs.

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The bill was supported in testimony by the Georgia Child Care Association (GCCA), VOICES for Georgia's Children, Georgia Early Education Alliance for Ready Students (GEEARS), and the Interfaith Children's Movement. It is also supported by Quality Care for Children.

Also on DECAL's 2013 legislative agenda is supporting Governor Nathan Deal's efforts to restore a full 180-day calendar for Georgia's Pre-K Program and the passage of HB 354, which primarily clarifies definitions regarding child care programs.

About Bright from the Start

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is responsible for meeting the child care and early education needs of Georgia's children and their families. It administers the nationally recognized Georgia's Pre-K Program, licenses child care centers and home-based child care, administers Georgia's Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS) program, federal nutrition programs, and manages voluntary quality enhancement programs.

The department also houses the Head Start State Collaboration Office, distributes federal funding to enhance the quality and availability of child care, and works collaboratively with Georgia child care resource and referral agencies and organizations throughout the state to enhance early care and education. For more information, go to www.dec.al.ga.gov.